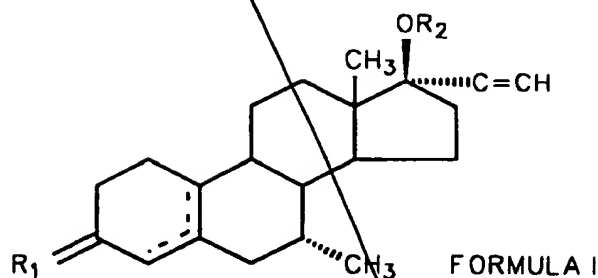


Claims:

1. Use of a 7 α -methyl-17 α -ethynyl-estrane derivative having the general formula I



wherein

$R_1 = H(OR_3)$ or O;

$R_2 = H$ or $(C_{1-18})Acyl$;

$R_3 = H$ or $(C_{1-18})Acyl$;

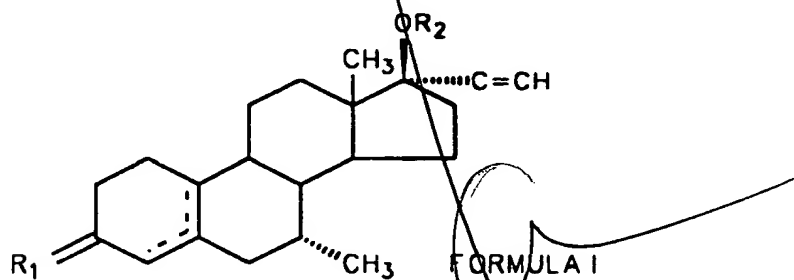
and the dotted line represents a double bond in the 4,5- or the 5,10-position, for the manufacture of a medicament for the prophylaxis or the treatment of atherosclerosis.

- The method*
2. Use according to claim 1, wherein $R_1 = H, OH$ or O.

- 15 *The method*
3. Use according to claim 1 or 2, wherein $R_2 = H$ and the dotted line represents a double bond in the 5,10-position.

- 20 *The method*
4. Use according to claim 1, wherein the a 7 α -methyl-17 α -ethynyl-estrane derivative is 7 α -methyl-17 α -ethynyl-17 β -hydroxy-estra-5(10)-en-3-one.

5. A method of inhibiting the process of atherosclerosis comprising administering to a mammal an atheroprotective amount of a 7 α -methyl-17 α -ethynyl-estrane derivative having the general formula I



5 wherein

R₁ = H(OR₃) or O;

R₂ = H or (C₁₋₁₈)Acyl;

R₃ = H or (C₁₋₁₈)Acyl;

and the dotted line represents a double bond in the 4,5- or the 5,10-position.

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6. The method according to claim 5 wherein the mammal is human.